



The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

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2022 MEETINGS

20 January – Member Meeting
Legacy of the Pullman Porters

March – Member Meeting
TBA

April – Member Meeting
TBA

May – Member Meeting
TBA

June – Member Meeting
TBA

July – Member Meeting
TBA

September – Member Meeting
TBA

49th Annual Meeting
TBA

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

Infrastructure Week Arrives—At Last!

The long sought “Infrastructure Week” finally arrived late last year when the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden on November 15, 2021. Officially titled the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**, or the IIJA, the legislation reauthorizes surface transportation programs for five years as well funding programs for water, energy, and broadband infrastructure. The \$1.2 trillion bill includes \$550 billion in “new” spending over and above what Congress would normally approve each year for these purposes.

Included in the bill is \$66 billion in “new” spending for rail and \$39 billion for transit. Included in the reauthorization of existing programs is a very substantial increase (see graph on page 3) in the grant that funds Amtrak on an annual basis. Overall, this historic infusion of cash represents the largest investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak in 1971.

The legislation provides \$44 billion, administered through the Federal Railroad Administration, for grants to Amtrak, states and others to improve and expand the intercity passenger rail network. Significantly, it will be up to the states to seize the initiative to develop projects and seek funding.

The legislation includes a number of Amtrak reforms sought by the Rail Passengers’ Association. Chief among them is a change in Amtrak’s mission (Sec.22201) striking the statement that Amtrak “achieve a performance level sufficient to justify expending public money” and substituting the words “in order to meet the intercity passenger rail needs of the United States.”

Two excellent explanations of what’s in the IIJA can be found in the **Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission News** and in the **November 15 issue of Railway Age**.

The full text of the IIJA may be accessed [HERE](#). Scroll down the opening page to view the bill’s contents listing. If you wish to view a specific section, use CTRL/F to open a search box at lower left and type in the section number. For example, type 22208 to view the section on food & beverage service.

Go to page 3 for more detail on the funding provided in the IIJA over the next five years for rail improvement and expansion.

MARP 2022 Meeting Schedule

Due to the ongoing pandemic, MARP will continue to meet online using Zoom. Watch your email for notice of the next Member Meeting at a date to be determined in March. The Executive Committee meets via Zoom on the third Wednesday of the month. If you have ideas to contribute, questions, or concerns please send them to us at marprail@yahoo.com. If you would like to sit in on a meeting, please contact MARP Chair John Guidinger at jhguidinger1@yahoo.com.

High Speed Rail Alliance Welcomes New Deputy Director



The **High Speed Rail Alliance** recently announced the appointment of Christopher Ott as Deputy Director. Ott is an enthusiastic supporter of passenger trains and has written professionally on trains from both a traveler's and an advocate's perspective. In assuming his new role, Ott said, "I've felt for a long time that the U.S. could do a lot better," adding that he sees the real possibility of a paradigm shift in U.S. transportation policy. "With the enthusiasm and support at a lot of different levels—federal, state, local, and individuals—I hope that it's all coming together." Rick Harnish is the Executive Director of the HSRA, formerly known as the Midwest High Speed Rail Association.

MARP Member Meeting

On Thursday, January 20, 27 members and friends joined on Zoom to hear famed railroad artist Robert West tell of his experiences growing up with a grandfather who worked out of the Jacksonville, Florida Terminal as a Pullman porter on the Atlantic Coast Railway. Mr. West, who likes to describe himself as a "train nut with a paint brush", has made a career of capturing on canvas the love of trains that



he gained listening to his grandfather, Mr. Alan Parish, who would regale his grandson with tales of the life of a Pullman porter. Porters were highly regarded within the Black community and, indeed, played a key role in establishing the Black middle-class.

Mr. West spoke of the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters under the leadership of **A. Philip Randolph** and is currently writing a book "*The Journey from Chains to Trains to Change*" recounting the role of the Pullman porters in the civil rights movement.

Mr. West concluded with the observation that railroads made America great, but it was people who built the railroads, people representing a host of cultures and ethnicities.



Time to Renew Your MARP Membership

You may renew online at marp.org/?page_id=4782

Or download a mail-in form at tinyurl.com/marp012

Midwest Regional Rail Plan

The final report of **The Midwest Regional Rail Plan** was made public at Chicago Union Station on October 13, 2021 by FRA Administrator Amit Bose who described it as "a 40-year multi-state framework and vision for restoring, modernizing, and expanding the existing intercity passenger rail network in the Midwest."

It is important to recognize that this plan is meant to guide, not dictate, the development of an integrated network of fast, frequent, reliable trains linking Midwest communities large and small and creating synergistic relationships in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Importantly, it will require a coordinated effort by the states and a massive commitment of funding from Federal, state, and private sources to bring it to fruition.



The FRA's Midwest Regional Rail Plan

FRA Project Manager Peter Schwartz, who guided the study from start to finish, was on hand for the January 14 Brown Bag Lunch series hosted by the High Speed Rail Alliance. He talked about the rationale for the study and what it means for development of a network of more trains going to more places at higher speeds throughout our region.

The session was recorded and can be accessed [HERE](#).

Read the full report [HERE](#).

No Reductions in Michigan Train Services

It's been a roller coaster ride in the last month for Amtrak managers as the Omicron variant has surged and staff shortages have persisted. To meet the challenges, Amtrak made the decision to reduce service on some Northeast Regional, long distance and state supported services.

MARP Government Affairs Coordinator, Steve Vagnozzi, has received assurances from MDOT Office of Rail that there will be no reduction in services on any of Michigan's three routes.

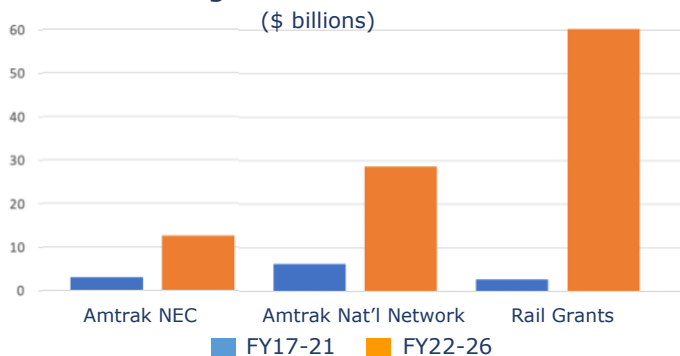
The Lakeshore, Ltd. and the Capitol, Ltd. will run 5 days a week for the next several weeks, as will **seven other long distance routes**. Amtrak has pledged to return to full service by March 27, or sooner if the situation improves before then.

Amtrak has remained firm in its **policies on masks for all and employee vaccination** out of concern for passenger safety.

WHAT'S IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE BILL FOR RAIL?

The **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** (IIJA) guarantees \$66B for rail over the next five years. Of that, \$36B will flow to the states through the new **Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail** grant program. Formerly known as State of Good Repair grants, the program designates \$24B for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and \$12B for the National Network (NN)—around \$4.8 B per year for the NEC and \$2.4B per year for the NN. Eligibility for the grants is expanded to encourage new and/or enhanced corridor development. Within 180 days of passage, the Federal Railroad Administration is tasked with a **Corridor Identification and Development Program** to identify those corridors they would like to see implemented. It is important that states be aggressively proactive in making the case for their projects. The **Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvement** (CRISI) grant program has around \$1B available annually for most currently eligible projects, but may benefit primarily freight rail projects. The Railroad Crossing Elimination Program is a new program funded at \$3B. Although not directly available to passenger rail projects, eligible applicants could use such funding in ways that would benefit the NEC or the NN. \$50 million per year is available to

Federal Funding Last 5 Years vs. Next 5 Years

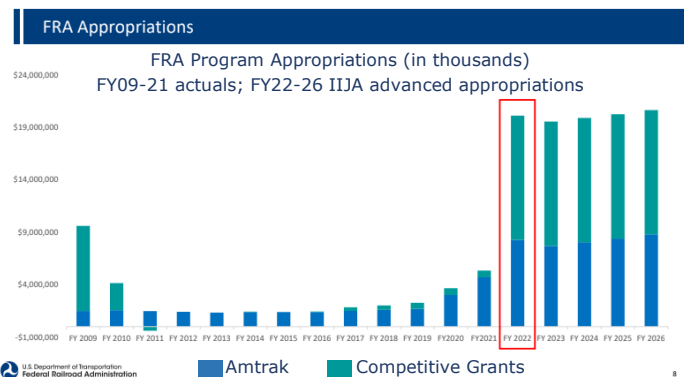


Source: Rail Passengers Association

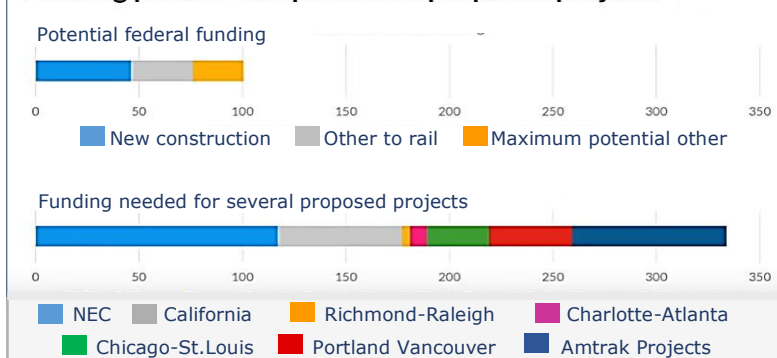
support state operating costs for new services under the Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program. Federal support could be up to 90% in year one, decreasing by 10% in each of the next four years and phasing out at 30% in year six.

The above graphic was part of a presentation given by Derrick James, Amtrak Government Affairs, for the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition on December 19. His remarks on the IIJA funding begin [HERE](#). Notable is his statement that “Congress delivered us a heavy amount of funding, but it’s coming in a way that really puts the states in the driver’s seat to determine what the route network will look like.” Rail Passengers CEO, Jim Mathews, has also signaled that **there is a lot of work ahead** for the FRA, the states and advocates to make best use of this historic investment.

\$66 billion seems like a lot of money—and it is, in comparison with FRA appropriations over the last decade. But a glance at the graph on the right shows that the money will go fast. Just seven currently proposed projects will consume more than three times the funding available in the IIJA. Whether Congress will extend these programs beyond FY 2026 is unclear.



Funding pales in comparison to proposed projects



Source: yfreemark@urban.org

View from elsewhere . . .

“Our 50th year as a company is certainly a milestone, and we launched several hallmark initiatives as we embark on a new era for passenger rail. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law enacted by the Biden Administration and Congress is a historic investment that will benefit customers and communities and prove that Amtrak is an important part of a larger solution to help America tackle the climate crisis, create economic opportunity and expand mobility.”

--Amtrak Board Chair Tony Coscia, **in a 16 Dec news release** reporting on progress during Amtrak’s 50th Anniversary fiscal year. The release highlights COVID relief efforts, recovery of ridership and continuing efforts to build a strong foundation for modernization and growth, citing announcements of Amtrak’s largest order for new trains in decades, the opening of new stations, the addition of new customer services and amenities, and proposals for new corridor service in up to 160 communities. Amtrak boasts putting in motion key initiatives to support an enhanced national rail network capable of serving more people in more places with better service.



Winter Park Express Returns

The **Winter Park Ski Train** is running again this year from Union Station in Denver on Fridays-Sundays through April 3. Make it a day trip, stay for the weekend, or catch the eastbound *California Zephyr* to return to the Midwest. Best of all, you can enjoy a relaxing mini-vacation in a beautiful setting even if you don’t ski. Midwesterners can book the *California Zephyr* from Chicago directly to the Winter Park Shuttle Bus Stop (WPS) to be whisked directly to the resort.

Photo by Marc Glucksman, courtesy of Amtrak

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